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WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN PRACTICE.

BY THE HON. DAVIS H. WAITE, GOVERNOR OF COLORADO, AND
THE HON. LORENZO CROUNSE, GOVERNOR OF NEBRASKA.

GOVERNOR WAITE:

AS THE result of last Fall's election, the women of Colorado were enfranchised and became possessed of all the rights of citizenship. In republics there are, in favor of equal suffrage, two principles, against which no just objection can be made—

1. There should be no taxation without representation.

There is, without doubt, plenty of taxation without representation, aside from the taxation of women, but this does not affect or in any manner excuse the fact that the women, a large class of people, amounting to nearly or quite one-half, are taxed without representation. The idea that women are represented by their husbands or sons is often incorrect where these relations exist, and totally fails in cases where the women are unmarried.

2. Suffrage should be based on intelligence.

Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. If a woman has the mental ability to protest against unjust laws, and to demand enactments calculated to promote the general welfare, why should not her wishes, and most especially when taxed as a citizen, be consulted in the exercise of the powers of the government?

The tendency of the age has been to the extension of suffrage, but regardless of the rights of women. The elective franchise was given to the negro in the South, with all his unfitness. From a very early period the bars of suffrage in the great Northwest have been let down, and the most ignorant male foreigners unable to speak our language, or realize the meaning of the "declaration of intentions," or even the act of voting, have been endowed with suffrage in advance of citizenship, and many of them

have shamelessly sold their votes to yet more shameless buyers. Undoubtedly such extension of suffrage was an error. The remedy, to some extent at least, has been by education, to assimilate this unfit mass of voters, and transform them into good citizens. Up to twenty years ago the common schools of the land did educate the youth of the country, so as to preserve the nation from decay. But since that time the irruption of pauper and contract labor has been so immense, has so concentrated in labor centres, and so isolated in customs, language, and residence, that the standard of national intelligence has been lowered, and the ratio of ignorance increased.

The political rights of woman in the past have been practically ignored in the United States, though recognized in Utah, Wyoming, Washington, and now in Colorado. Man, with his physical and mental superiority, has had unlimited control both in this and all other nations, and none can deny that liberty is endangered, and human rights are stricken down all over the world. Let me quote from two of the greatest clergymen of the age.

Cardinal Gibbons says :

“ The economic conditions of the United States are fast approaching those of England. The homes of the poor are marked by destitution and squalor. The light of Heaven is being closed from miserable tenement room and attic. Flesh and blood are becoming more cheap and bread more dear. The well-being of the car horse is more solicitously watched than that of the driver. Small wonder that strong men, maddened by the tears of a wife and cries of starving children, sometimes band themselves together and resort to deeds of violence.”

This from the great Catholic prelate. Listen to an equally great Protestant divine.

Said Bishop Potter, of New York, in a recent sermon :

“ When I speak of this as an era of plutocrats, nobody can misunderstand me. All recognize the rise of the money power. Its growth not merely destroys the independence of the people, but the blind believers in the omnipotent power of money assert that its liberal use condones every offence. The pulpit does not speak out as it should. These plutocrats are the enemies of religion as they are of the state. I have heard the corrupt use of money in elections, and the sale of the sacred right of the ballot, openly defended by ministers of the Gospel.”

Bishop Simpson, a distinguished Methodist divine, said in 1864 that “ no great moral reform would ever be enforced by law until the right of suffrage was given to women.”

The necessity of some remedy for such conditions cannot be denied. To my knowledge, there are no just objections to equal suffrage. It is claimed that to admit women to full citizenship includes the right to be elected to office, and this, carried out, say certain scientists, "would defy nature; it would pull the woman out of her element, willing or unwilling, with the fact under their noses that the mass of women, out of their sphere, through ignorance or hard facts, are, by their weakness, in an unnatural position, forced to inferiority. They are women, and not men. When they fight man, there may be one here and there found to hold her own, but the mass are driven to the ragged edge or into the gutter." *

But why need war, pestilence, and famine be the normal condition of mankind? Mr. Kinney forgets that in the so-called "battle of life" women have never had a fair chance. They are weaker physically and perhaps, as a mass, mentally than men, but until within a few years the higher walks of education have been closed to them. A proper sphere of women, without doubt, is to bear children, and this fact will prevent women from engaging so extensively as men in legislative and official duties, but it deserves little consideration as against the right of women to suffrage, or to hold office, if, all things considered, she is the choice of the people. It is objected that in time of war, women cannot fight in the ranks. That is true, but battles are not won wholly in the field. The patriotic women North and South, in the late unpleasantness, in their own legitimate way, accomplished as much and perhaps more than the warriors on the battlefield.

It must be admitted that the effect which equal suffrage will produce upon the State and nation is a matter of conjecture. In Utah, the right of women to vote under the Territorial laws did not injuriously affect polygamy, but polygamy there was a tenet of the Mormon religion, and a large proportion of the female voters were polygamists by faith or practice. In Wyoming and Washington, to my knowledge, no extraordinary progress has been made in the line of political reform that can be traced to female suffrage, and in Colorado sufficient time has not elapsed to speak understandingly of the result. Certainly there is little hope of the future, unless women, admitted to suffrage, acquaint them-

* Abbot Kinney, *Conquest of Death*, page 39.

selves more thoroughly than men with political affairs, and "come up with greater zeal to the help of the Lord against the mighty," in providing a remedy for the fearful condition of this nation, the result of the positive acts of conspiring monopolists, and the hitherto criminal negligence of the mass of the voters.

Of course there is nothing in equal suffrage that of itself is partisan. In every State, men of all parties either support or oppose female suffrage, but there is no doubt that in Colorado the women owe suffrage to the Populists. The Populists in the General Assembly nearly all supported the bill, but a majority of the members of both the old parties voted in opposition. The law was recommended by a Populist governor, the bill was introduced by a Populist Representative, at the general election the Populist party in the State supported the measure ; but nearly all the Republican counties and all the Democratic counties voted largely against it.

Equal suffrage is no part of the St. Louis or Omaha platform, but it was at one time a part of the St. Louis platform. Miss Frances Willard and other distinguished advocates of the rights of women secured its adoption in committee at the night session, but it was eliminated because—

1. Suffrage is essentially a State right, and can neither be conferred nor taken away by act of Congress ; and

2. Because it interfered with that stern but common-sense rule that a political platform must not be loaded down with unnecessary issues, no matter how excellent. The only legitimate object of a national political platform is to declare the policy of the party upon the living issues, which must be decided in the pending campaign.

Miss Willard was terribly disappointed, and shook the dust off her gaiters, as her testimonial against the St. Louis Convention, and has ever since, I doubt not, thought many naughty things against the People's Party, but then and there the pathway was made straight for the success of equal suffrage. It was the glorious preamble to the St. Louis and Omaha platforms which stripped the old parties of their disguises, branded them as servile tools of monopoly, and founded the People's Party on the rock of "equal rights for all, and special privileges to none." No Republican or Democratic State will ever confer equal suffrage upon women, because Republicans and Democrats,

as political parties, do not believe in the doctrine of equal rights.

The principle of equal rights for all against which for the past quarter of a century the two old parties have waged relentless war is the sign by which the People's Party is to conquer. It will, at no distant day, not only redeem women from political servitude, but also emancipate man and woman from industrial slavery.

DAVIS H. WAITE.

GOVERNOR CROUNSE:

At its session held in 1881 the Legislature of Nebraska was induced to pass an Act providing for the submission to the people of a proposed amendment to the State constitution extending the elective franchise to women. This action on the part of the Legislature proceeded not so much from a conviction that the amendment was necessary as it did from a desire to test the sense of our people on the subject. Neither did the amendment grow out of any urgent demand on the part of the women of the State, but it was rather inspired by advocates and agitators from without who supposed Nebraska to be a new and promising field for experiment.

The vote on the proposed amendment, which was taken in November, 1882, was preceded by a campaign of marked activity and earnestness, and if the minds of the women of the State were not awakened to a sense of wrongs endured and rights denied, it was from no lack of teaching and exhortation. The canvass received the benefit and impetus of the National Woman Suffrage Convention which was held at Omaha, the metropolis of the State, in September of that year, and which was largely attended by ladies from all parts of the United States, some of whom had earned a national reputation as advocates of the cause. Many of these ladies under the leadership of the veteran, Susan B. Anthony, distributed themselves throughout the State and labored unceasingly until the close of the polls. Nevertheless, the result showed a vote of but 25,756 for, and 50,693 against, the proposed amendment, while 12,619 voted neither way—or out of a total vote of nearly 90,000, but 25,756 declared themselves in favor of it. It is fair to assume that the 25,756 males who voted for the proposed amendment were actuated by the same gallantry and

spirit of fairness which moved the Legislature to submit it, and voiced the sentiment of all the women who demanded it.

It is also but fair to assume that while some 13,000 were indifferent to the question, the other 50,000 represented the women who were willing to leave the ballot with their husbands, fathers, and brothers, whose good judgment they respected, and whose wisdom and care stood attested by many laws on our statute-books enacted for the protection of their person and property. This adverse vote also included that other numerous class who not only believe there is no necessity for woman's participation in active politics, but who claim as against "woman's rights" the right to be let alone and not to be forced by their bolder and more ambitious sisters into fields which they feel that nature and a sense of delicacy disqualify them from entering. For, argue as we may, the franchise once bestowed, the obligation falls on all women alike to exercise it. When granted, it comes not simply as a privilege or right, but it falls as a duty—a duty which rests especially on the intelligent and virtuous. When the bold, the bad, and the ambitious among the women, like their kind among the males, are moving in the direction of bad legislation and loose government, the educated and refined will be compelled to lay aside their modesty and, willingly or unwillingly, will be forced to oppose them.

Nebraska is an agricultural rather than a manufacturing State and there are no laws of a special character required for the benefit of women. But every reasonable demand short of a grant of the elective franchise seems to have been anticipated by our statutes. The laws have even gone further and given women rights and privileges not bestowed upon males. In common with the statutes of most States, those of Nebraska declare that all property, real and personal, which a woman possesses at the time of her marriage, and any which may come to her by descent, gift, or purchase, becomes and remains her separate property and is not subject to disposal by her husband or liable for his debts. She may also, as a married woman, carry on trade or business on her own account, and the earnings shall be her own, while the husband is liable at the same time for the support of herself and of their family. Should she make the mistake of marrying a husband cruel enough to maltreat her, or one so shiftless as to fail to support her, she can rid herself of him by divorce.

In the election of school officers mothers and taxpaying women are allowed to vote. This right, however, is rarely exercised.

The laws relating to the sale of intoxicating liquors and in which the women of the State are so vitally concerned, have been carefully and wisely considered. Liquors can be lawfully sold only under a license for which the vendor must pay for the benefit of the school fund the sum of \$500 at least, or such greater sum as the local authorities may demand, thus enabling localities where the sentiment will sustain the action to fix the price so high as to amount to prohibition. Applicants for licenses must have the indorsement of thirty freeholders certifying to their respectability and standing, and before entering upon their business they must give a bond in the sum of \$5,000 that they will not violate any of the provisions of the law regulating the sale of intoxicating drinks. Among these restrictions are those forbidding sale to minors and habitual drunkards, and coupled with these is a special provision for the benefit of married women, enabling them to maintain in their own right a suit on the bond for all damages sustained by themselves or their children on account of liquors sold to their husbands.

By way of comparison it may be remarked that the Nebraska laws relating to the sale of intoxicating liquors are far more thorough and far reaching, and are better observed, than they are in the sister and adjoining State, Wyoming, where woman suffrage has obtained for quarter of a century. In an article on "Woman Suffrage in Wyoming," which recently appeared in the *Chicago Record*, the writer, commenting on reports from correspondents who have been on the ground, says, among other things :

"At the capital city of the State gambling-houses are abundant and open saloons are as frequent as any other kind of stores, and the charge is made that 'not a single act of legislation aimed at the betterment of the human race has been passed through woman's influence.'"

How true this may be I cannot say, but it is true that in Lincoln, the capital city of Nebraska, a city of more than 65,000 inhabitants, there are no gambling-houses, no houses of prostitution, and the few saloons which exist are held under the most rigid restriction.

The verdict of 1882 stands, in my opinion, as the verdict of to-day. If, however, at any time the general wish of the women

of the State shall be for the elective franchise, I have no doubt that it will be accorded to them. Nevertheless, without it Nebraska's advance in wealth, population, and in the scale of intelligence stands with scarcely a parallel; but what she is stands to the credit of woman as much as to that of man. Nebraska's sons are largely what their mothers have made them, and what the husbands have achieved has been with the advice and support of the wives, whose influence is felt in a thousand ways other than in the caucus, the convention, or at the polls.

LORENZO CROUNSE.